

Madras High Court orders fresh autopsy of fisherman who died at sea

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The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court has ordered a re-postmortem be conducted on the body of a Pudukkottai fisherman who died after falling into the sea when his boat collided with a Sri Lankan naval vessel. The postmortem will be conducted on November 18.

The court passed the order on the petition filed by the fisherman R. Raj Kiran's wife, R. Brundha, who alleged he was first shot by the Sri Lankan authorities and subsequently the Sri Lankan vessel collided with the boat wantonly.

Justice G.R. Swaminathan directed the Pudukkottai district administration to exhume the body and conduct the re-postmortem at the site itself.

The judge observed that when such genuine apprehension had been raised by the petitioner, it was the duty of the State to allay the same. The court also allowed a retired Professor of Forensic Science to be present, representing the petitioner, at the time of exhumation and postmortem.

The court directed the authorities to file a report to the court and serve a copy to the petitioner's counsel. The case was adjourned till November 24.

The petitioner also sought a probe into the death of her husband. She said on October 18 that her husband Raj Kiran, along with S. Suganthan and A. Xavier, ventured into the sea in a boat owned by Suresh Kumar. They were intercepted by a Sri Lankan naval vessel and were told they had crossed the International Maritime Boundary Line and were in Sri Lankan waters. The fishermen tried to escape from the authorities.

It was said that the Sri Lankan vessel collided with the boat accidentally and Raj Kiran fell into the sea and drowned. But Ms. Brundha said a few fishermen who were only two nautical miles away on other boats said that Raj Kiran was shot and he fell unconscious in the boat. The other two fishermen were detained by the authorities.

Raj Kiran's body was recovered and a postmortem conducted at Jaffna Medical College Hospital in Sri Lanka. Later, the body was handed over to the Indian authorities. But the postmortem certificate was not handed over, she said.

The body was brought to Kottaipattinam port by the Indian authorities and handed over to the family members. But the authorities did not permit them to take the body home. It was taken to a cemetery and buried.

Ms. Brundha said she had perused some photographs of her husband's body provided by the authorities and was convinced that there were injuries on the body.

(News Source: Except for the headline, this story has not been edited by Rashtra News staff and is published from a www.thehindu.com feed)

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